

## **2013-2017 MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

### **Introduction**

This is the first Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The plan was developed to comply with the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005). It will be submitted to the Province of Ontario in accordance with the reporting requirements of the AODA. This accessibility plan outlines the policies and actions that Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will put in place to improve full access to and participation in all aspects of the Centre for people with disabilities.

### **Accessibility Vision**

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre's vision is to be a community leader in providing inclusive and accessible services that meet the needs of community members and promote their community participation. To that end, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre is one of the only non disability oriented community non-profit organizations, and the only immigrant-serving organization in the Province of Ontario to have a full-time disability specialist on staff.

### **Statement of Organizational Commitment to Accessibility**

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and equal opportunity. We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

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## **Reflecting Past Accomplishments**

Since the year 2008, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre has taken active steps toward accomplishing our accessibility vision.

In 2009, our Disability Settlement Counsellor conducted an informal accessibility audit of the agency premises and practices. At that time, it was noted that our main location at 1420 Burnhamthorpe Road East, Mississauga was an accessible building with a well-maintained and functioning elevator. It was noted, however, that our offices did not have automatic door openers, the reception desk was too high for people using wheelchairs and those of short stature to reach, and the turning radius in the halls and many of the offices was insufficient to accommodate a standard wheelchair. Furthermore, there was no information about the agency's programs and services available in accessible formats. Additionally, there were no formal written policies related to accessibility. It was also noted that some of our programs were offered in premises that are not accessible to people with disabilities. In the subsequent years, there has been much progress in many of these areas.

In 2010 Dixie Bloor entered into a contract with the City of Mississauga to house our main office in a new building at 3650 Dixie Road, Mississauga. At that time, requests were made to ensure that the new space had automatic door openers on all public doors, raised and Braille signage, and an auditory system to alert elevator users of their arrival between floors. At the same time, the agency began implementing procedures to enable staff to identify disability-related needs, our IT department began plans to make changes to the agency website which include accessibility features, and arrangements began for the purchase of a new front desk that would enable reception staff and clients to visibly see each other from a seated position.

In 2011 the agency addressed many of the issues identified in the 2010 report. Improvements were made to the accessibility of the agency website, with the implementation of adjustable font sizing functionality. The Main Office, the Employment Centre, the Fieldgate St. English Language Classes and the Childcare classes all had automatic doors installed. An auditory signal was installed in the elevator of the new building to alert visually impaired users of their arrival at a floor. High visibility signage was installed in both the exterior and interior spaces of the building. Ergonomic equipment was purchase to alleviate work-related pains and protect the health of staff and volunteers. The height of the reception desk remained a barrier, which was being accommodated by staff who would physically move to the side of the desk to serve clients who were unable to be seen. The agency contacted the company who sold the original desk to enquire about more accessible alternatives. Also, with the impending enactment of the Customer Services mandate under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, to be in force January 1<sup>st</sup> 2012, staff, volunteers, students, and agents of Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre received Accessible Customer Service training and certification. Over 200 staff were trained in December 2011 in adherence with the legislation.

In 2012 the Disability Settlement Counsellor continued to train and certify staff on the regulations under the Accessible Customer Service mandate. The agency also contacted a

community partner who translated all agency flyers into Braille while internally these same documents were translated into Plain Language and Large Print. Written procedures were developed to ensure that all community events are accessible to all members of the community and that special needs can be identified and accommodated as seamlessly as possible. Members of each department of the agency also engaged in a communication café session during which we discussed areas of strength as well as need in terms of the agency's ability to serve people with disabilities. It was acknowledged that the agency has taken great strides toward greater accessibility and inclusion. The suggestions from this meeting focused mainly on enhancing the agency profile in the community with regards to accessibility, and working with community partners to ensure their services (particularly immigrant oriented services) are responsive to disability needs and vice versa. At the end of 2012, the accessibility of the website is improving in stages while the front desk remains an issue.

## **Current Accessibility Status and Action Plan**

### ***Accessible Emergency Information***

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre is committed to providing the customers and clients with publicly available emergency information in an accessible way upon request. We also provide employees with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when necessary.

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will take the following steps to make all Emergency Information is available in accessible format, and promoted as such, by **January 1, 2014**:

- Compile all Emergency Information and send to Braille and Alternate Format services
- Create signage to advise community members of the availability of such

### ***Training***

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre continues to provide training to employees, volunteers and other staff members on Ontario's accessibility laws and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities. Training is provided in a way that best suits the duties of employees, volunteers and other staff members.

To ensure employees are provided with the training needed to meet Ontario's accessible laws, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre has created a training presentation that each staff member, volunteer and agent reviews. The presentation also contains a knowledge and application test which each person is required to complete and submit to the Disability Settlement Counsellor for approval prior to certification.

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will take the following steps to document the ongoing accessibility training conducted by **December 1st of each year**:

- Maintain an ongoing active list of all staff, volunteers and agents
- Maintain the list of certified members and re-test everyone every 3 years

### ***Information and Communications***

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities. We will consult with people with disabilities to determine their information and communication needs.

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will take the following steps to make all new websites and content on those sites conform with WCAG 2.0, Level A by **January 1, 2014**:

- IT staff will review the WCAG 2.0 Level A standards and develop a plan for site changes
- IT staff will implement changes, engage in site testing, and apply for WCAG recognition

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will take the following steps to make ensure existing feedback processes are accessible to people with disabilities upon request by **January 1, 2015**:

- Translate feedback forms into accessible formats
- Develop various electronic means for people to provide feedback such as a specific section on the website and a voicemail option on the central phone line
- Implement other means as suggested by community members

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will take the following steps to make sure all publicly available information is made accessible upon request by **January 1, 2016**:

- Translate all publicly available information into accessible formats
- Post the information on the website once it is accessible
- Implement other steps as suggested by community members

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will take the following steps to make all websites and content conform with WCAG 2.0, Level AA by **January 1, 2018**:

- IT staff will review the WCAG 2.0 Level A standards and develop a plan for site changes
- IT staff will implement changes, engage in site testing, and apply for WCAG recognition

### **Employment**

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

We will take the following steps to notify the public and staff that, when requested, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will accommodate people with disabilities during the recruitment and assessment processes and when people are hired **before January 1, 2014**:

- Develop, post and make publicly available an accessible recruitment, hiring and retention policy and procedure
- Include a statement on all recruitment advertising that Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre encourages all qualified applicants to apply and is committed to providing reasonable accommodations upon request at any stage of the hiring process, and that disclosure of such need will not impact a candidate's opportunity to be hired.
- Retain a staff file for accommodations requests, provided and denied, and engage in active annual review of accommodation needs of existing staff

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will take the following steps to develop and put in place a process for developing individual accommodation plans and return-to-work policies for employees that have been absent due to a disability **before January 1, 2014**:

- Send a written notice to employees returning to work inviting them to discuss with HR their accommodation needs
- HR to document the accommodation needs and requested accommodations, subsequent steps or resolutions
- Monthly meeting with the staff member in the first six months to assess emerging accessibility and accommodation concerns and needs

We will take the following steps to ensure the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities are taken into account in performance management and career development processes **before January 1, 2014**:

- Job performance will be evaluated with reference to the accessibility needs of the employee with disabilities, including whether requested or other agreed upon accommodations and supports were implemented
- Career development plans will reflect the skills and capabilities of the individual employees without reference to the employee's disability needs insofar as these are accommodated to be negotiated subsequent to job placement.

### **Accessibility of Public Spaces**

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will take the following steps to prevent and remove identified accessibility barriers **ongoing beginning immediately**:

- Audit the public spaces of the agency to ensure that: interior doors and hallways have a minimum turning radius of 60" x 60"; all doors are equipped with lever handles rather than knob handles; all light switches are flat panel rather than small toggle switches; all signage is both word and pictorial with bold colour and tactile applications; that all images posted on the website are captioned.
- Actively seek feedback from all community members as to their accessibility requirements and document emerging identified barriers
- On a priority basis, develop plans and measures for the timely removal of barriers

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will put the following procedures in place to prevent service disruptions to its accessible parts of its public spaces **ongoing beginning immediately**.

- Make final arrangements to have the reception desk at the main office replaced with a more accessible desk
- Engage in ongoing monitoring of public spaces such as the elevator, entrances, hallways and stairs to ensure their accessibility
- Address disruptions to accessibility as soon as they are identified (same day)
- Alert all community members of the nature and duration of the disruption via the website, telephone outgoing message, and postings around the premises
- Advise community members of alternate measures available to meet their needs during the disruption

### **AODA Compliance Report**

Starting in 2012, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre is required to report on the agency's adherence to the above mandates annually by December 31<sup>st</sup>. The first report was submitted successfully and Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre is currently compliant with the legislation and is on track to be a leader in the community for accessible and inclusive service.